

Benny Wenda: Tribal Leader from Dani/Lani Tribe

I am very upset with this man (Jared Diamond).

What he has written about my people is misleading, I am a Dani man. People are always talking about me and my people to make themselves famous. He is not writing about what the Indonesian military are doing - that is the real violence that is happening in West Papua.

Tribal war for the Dani was not every day or every year as he describes in this book. Tribal war only happened when something happened like a land dispute or someone was attacked. This is what happens in all societies.

Indonesia illegally occupied our country in 1963 and that is when the massacres really started everywhere in West Papua. The Indonesian government did not rescue us from a cycle of violence like Jared Diamond says – they brought violence to us like we had never known before – they have murdered, raped and imprisoned my people and they have stolen our land to make themselves rich. I remember in 1977 when Indonesia started a war in the Central Highlands of West Papua, which is where I come from. They killed thousands of people, I saw my people being murdered by Indonesian soldiers and my own Auntie was raped in front of my eyes. Indonesia told the world that this was 'tribal war' – they tried to pretend that it was us that was violent and not them - this book is doing the same. He should apologize.'

Indonesia has been killing my people every day, every month and every year – how could Jared Diamond ignore what happening in West Papua in his book? The Indonesian military are committing Genocide in West Papua. By talking only about tribal war in West Papua and ignoring what the Indonesians are doing to my people your book is supporting Indonesia's illegal occupation of West Papua.

Please leave us alone with our mother-land.

Please leave us alone with our nature.

Please leave us alone and respect our custom and our way of live.

Please leave us alone and do not destroy our culture and our identity.

Markus Haluk – a senior member of the Papuan Customary Council

- Balim people today are heading for extinction, caused by the Indonesian military atrocities.
- The total of Dani victims from the Indonesian atrocities over the 50 year period is far greater than those from tribal war of the Dani people over hundreds of thousands of years.
- Military operations [since Indonesian occupation of West Papua] have resulted in hundreds of thousands of Papuans being killed, tortured, shot dead, buried alive in the ground, jailed, kidnapped, disappeared and all manner of other human rights violations. The result is that the ethnic Melanesian West Papuan race is currently heading for extinction.
- [Jared Diamond's] writings clearly show an extremely subjective attitude for a piece of academic work.

Matius Murib - Human Rights campaigner, Director of the Baptist Voice of Papua

- This book spreads prejudices about Papuan people.
- [Diamond implies] that indigenous Papuans still display a way of life from hundreds of years ago. This is not true and strengthens the idea that indigenous people are 'backwards', 'live in the past' or are 'stone age.'
- Jared Diamond thinks that indigenous people have benefited from state power in their lives, because this power has ended tribal war. [But] the author makes no mention of the brutality of Indonesian soldiers of the Indonesian military in their killing, rape and dispossession of the West Papuan people.
- This book gives a very unbalanced and subjective impression of the reality of life in the land of Papua today.
- Since the 1960s, the dominant actor in using violent and brutal methods and approaches is the Indonesian military, not the indigenous Papuan people.

Rev Socratez Yoman - Head of the Baptists Church, West Papua

- All the myths and stigmas of the Indonesian colonists are accepted without hearing the criticisms of the indigenous Papuan population.
- The poverty of the indigenous Papuan population is not the inheritance of our Papuan ancestors. Because history proves that before Indonesia came to occupy and colonize indigenous Papuans, indigenous Papuans were not dependent on anybody, with their own history, orderly lives ruled by an orderly culture, who had never been ruled by other people.
- The poverty of the indigenous Papuans is a product of the system of government and economic occupation purposely carried out by Indonesia.
- Papuans, in particular Lani people do not have a culture of war. It is true that there are 'tribal wars' or 'conflict' in Timika, [but they have] been deliberately created, guided and nurtured by Jakarta elites.
- 'The World Before Yesterday' cannot be separated from the efforts of Indonesia to destroy and wipe out the Papuan people. This book also has failed to research in depth the cultural values of the Lani people. The author makes a superficial assessment which is not based on analysis of real in-depth research.
- I hope that the author will openly apologize to we the Papuan people, in particular for the fatal errors in his book. The author is conveying information which destroys [our] good name.

Dominikus Surabut - currently jailed for treason for peacefully declaring the restoration of West Papuan independence

One of the most real examples of racism is the political apartheid of South Africa, where state policy prioritized white people in the oppression of black people. This is also what is happening to black West Papuans beneath the Indonesian government and its allies (America and Europe), whereby Indonesia oppresses tribal societies in Papua and treats them as cannibals, in order to gain control of territory and natural resources. This is nothing new, but is the very nature and character of colonial occupation of indigenous peoples, where they are treated as second class citizens whose oppression is justified by painting them as backwards, archaic, warring tribes – as suggested by Jared Diamond in his book about tribal people."

